

moved to, and secondly, she remained in it a whole quarter. There was no doubt very good reason for leaving in the middle of the following quarter, but she was clearly liable for the quarter she occupied. As however it was a case of hardship, he (his Honour) would make an order for payment by easy instalments, viz., 10s. a-month.

#### THE GAS QUESTION: NOTES OF PROGRESS, &c.

At Cokermonth the price has been reduced from 9s. to 6s. 8d.; and at Portsea, from 6s. 6d. to 6s.—Gas in Bradford, says a correspondent of the local *Observer*, is 5s., while in the neighbouring town of Huddersfield the company have voluntarily reduced their price to 4s.—If the Stockton Company supply their customers at 2s. 6d., says a correspondent of the *Leeds Intelligencer*, the price at which it will pay in Leeds is 1s. 9d.—“Six shillings has been proved in the City of London to be exorbitant,” say the ratepayers and parishioners of St. Leonard’s, Shoreditch, in public meeting assembled, “and this vestry pledges itself to use every exertion to secure from any source a supply of gas at a price not exceeding 4s.”—It is thus, by comparing notes, that a wholesome spirit of discontent, mingled, it may be, occasionally, with some minor errors in detail, is fast reducing the anomalous state of gas economics to something like consistency. In all such cases allowance is made, where there seems to be any reason for making such allowance, for difference of relative position with respect to coal; but, the truth is, we have clearly shown, from the companies’ own returns, that the price of coal has had comparatively little to do with the actual price of gas, or the possibility of its reduction.—The City of London Companies seem to have had some reason for the belief that the progress of the Central Gas Consumers’ Company towards a practical working state would give an additional impetus to the provincial movement; for we find that the reductions already made by the old companies themselves, in order to arrest that progress, are now being made good use of in the way of argument, in favour of further reductions, amongst the provincial gas consumers. The actual and promised reductions of the old London manufacturers are now precisely those of the new, namely, 4s., with a conditional promise of further reduction, and yet we find an “anti-humbbug” in the interest of the old, advertising the new, by implication, in the *Times*, as a set of wild adventurers, backed by some tinkering pretender in the art of gas making, promising the most improbable advantages to gas consumers and shareholders! This “anti-humbbug,” clearly shows the public, at least, that he, for one, is no believer in the sincerity of his old friends, who ought therefore to bridle the tongue of such a mischief-maker at this critical moment, if they think it “important to the public,” that no shadow of doubt as to their own good faith should interfere with all that now remains of their future prospects as the exclusive reapers of the city harvest. As for ourselves, we do give them much more credit for sincerity now than their own indiscreet partisan virtually advises them to possess: our only fear is, that their repentance, as predicted, not only by us, but by their own public advocate in the late *Gas Gazette*, may have come “too late.”—The Great Central Gas Consumers’ Bill in Parliament, has been declared to have complied with the Standing Orders.—We are informed, says the *Morning Herald*, that a Mr. Wilkinson, of Grimesthorpe, near Sheffield, has invented a gas-making apparatus that will produce 9,000 cubic feet of gas from one ton of coals, and is so constructed that any steady labourer may manage it with as little trouble as trimming the oil lamps required to give the same amount of light. Mr. W. says that good gas may thus be obtained for less than 2s. per 1,000 cubic feet.—The business at the Worcester Works is said to have increased from a consumption of 16,000,000 cubic feet under the old company, to 25,000,000 under the new, and this increased consumption lately yielded the new company a dividend “at the rate of 8 per cent. per annum, besides setting aside a handsome sum for depreciation of plant.”—It is known, says a writer in the *Bradford Observer*, that the original shares in the Bradford Gas Company are paying 30 per cent. on their capital out of

the 5s. at present charged, “so that there is room for a great reduction;” but it is a mistake to suppose that the dividend would necessarily be reduced by such a reduction,—the experience of gas companies in general, as shown in their Parliamentary returns, proves the very contrary to be the probable result. With all their profit, complaints are made of the inadequate supply of gas in Bradford.—The Whitehaven Gas-work, says the *Leicester Guardian*, pays a fair per centage for invested capital at 4s. per 1,000 feet.—The process for manufacturing the patent hydro-carbon gas is thus described in the *Mining Journal*:—“In one set of retorts is placed a quantity of charcoal and scraps of iron, which are brought to a bright red heat, and water allowed to fall upon them drop by drop, by which the water is decomposed, the carbon and iron taking up the oxygen—the hydrogen being set free. In another retort, resin, tar, or other hydro-carbon, is decomposed, by passing it through a mass of iron chains; and every 1,000 feet of gas for brilliant illumination is composed of 500 feet of pure hydrogen from the water, and 500 of carburetted hydrogen from the hydro-carbon. Mr. White has stated,” adds the writer, “that, with every expense, carefully calculated from practical experience, in the large way, (say) above 300,000 cubic feet per day, it can be made at 1s. per 1,000 feet. It is now getting into extensive operation in the large manufactories in the Midland Counties; the Broad Plain Soap Works, Bristol—the largest in the kingdom—are lighted with it; the town of Southport; Parkhouse, near Edinburgh; and the apparatus is being erected at the South Metropolitan Gas Works, Old Kent-road, Surrey.”—Madrid, it appears, is to be lighted by an English Gas Company, and several of the other chief cities in Spain are to be lighted with gas.

#### THE WESTMINSTER MEETING FOR THE '51 EXPOSITION.

ON Thursday morning last a meeting was held at Willis’s Rooms, St. James’s, to promote the success of this important undertaking, when the platform was crowded with men of high station and character, and the large room filled by a most respectable audience. Many ladies were present, including the Duchess of Sutherland; and we were glad to hear Lord Carlisle announce, in the course of his most eloquent address, that a ladies’ committee had been formed, to give assistance to the project. We understand that the members of the executive committee have been re-appointed as salaried officers, with the understanding that they are to devote the whole of their time to the matter. Arrangements should be immediately come to as to the building; there is not a week to spare.

#### METROPOLITAN SEWERS COMMISSION.

A GENERAL court was with great difficulty got together on Friday last, after repeated half-hour postponements,—appellants, reporters, and others on business being meanwhile detained for nearly one hour in the staircase, and nearly another in the court-room, till some of the officers beat about for commissioners. Lord Ebrington, Sir J. Burgoyne, and Messrs. Hayes, Hardwick, and Lawes, were present from the outset, and ultimately Mr. Stephenson took the place of Captain Veitch, who had left, unwell. Lord Ebrington apologized for the public inconvenience, on the ground that the new commissioners were not paid functionaries, and were very limited in number, and otherwise engaged both publicly and privately, “so that the delay was unavoidable, and might be so again, so long as the law for the protection of ratepayers remained in its present defective state.” Amongst other business transacted at this meeting, the court agreed to sanction an expenditure of 500l. in the reduction of the Ordnance map of London to the scale of 1 foot per mile, a room for this purpose having already been engaged in Hatton-garden. Permission was also given to the Sewage Manure Company to lay a waste pipe into the Walham-green sewer; and some repairs and surveys were ordered.—The *Times*, while still grumbling, and on good ground, at the proceedings, or rather the non-pro-

ceedings, of a commission apparently incapable, from preoccupation, of doing the duties devolving on it, thus complains of the past, present, and prospective state of things:—“The commissioners have not only done nothing, but even their preliminary palavers have indicated no definite tendency to any general principles. It seems as yet to be totally uncertain whether there will be one comprehensive scheme of drainage for the whole metropolis, or whether different principles will be applied to different areas,—whether a good out-fall is to be sought, or whether detached reservoirs are to be employed,—whether we are to have culverts or soil-pits, ‘tunnels’ or ‘sumps.’ The engineer to the commission is no wiser than anybody else, and his scheme for a particular piece of drainage [that of Victoria-street, Westminster, into the Thames] is accordingly made ‘independent in its action,’ and so ingeniously contrived as heretofore to harmonize with either one ‘result’ or another.”

We have received great complaints from parties anxious to lay down drainage at their own cost, of being unable to obtain reply to applications after long and injurious delay.

#### BOOKS.

*The Building Societies’ Directory and Almanac for 1850, with Digest of the Laws relating to them, &c.* Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange.

*A Guide to Benefit Building Societies, with a Practical adaptation of Life Assurance to the requirements of their Members.* By J. H. JAMES, Consulting Actuary. Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., Stationers’-court; and Wilson and Sons, Cheap-side.

*A Treatise on Benefit Building Societies, containing Remarks on the Erroneous Tendency of many of the Societies at present in existence, and an Inquiry into the True Causes of their Defective Operation, with a view to their Amendment, or the formation of new Societies upon correct principles.* By ARTHUR SCRATCHLEY, M.A., Actuary to the Western Life Assurance Society. J. W. Parker, West Strand.

THOUGH last in our list, Mr. Scratchley’s treatise is not the least in our estimation. It appears to contain a thorough and uncompromising exposure of the complicated errors under which these societies labour. They are multiplying in all directions, and are calculated materially to modify the condition of the industrious classes; and as the valuable results which might be obtained through their agency are daily becoming more manifest, it is of urgent necessity, as remarked, that definite principles should be laid down to serve as a guide for their correct formation, and as the basis of some consistency in their subsequent operations. This the author has endeavoured to accomplish by the suggestion of rules, the calculation of tabular and other formulae, and the interfusion of much miscellaneous instruction and advice. Above all, he considers that, among other defects of the various systems afloat, “one stands prominent as the fatal obstacle in the way of their success, arising from the almost universal condition by which the existence of a building society is limited to a specified number of years.” His endeavour, therefore, has been to prepare the way for the establishment of permanent associations, on more correct and practical principles than those of “the originators of the multitudinous variety of new and improved plans, promising such large benefits simultaneously to each of the two classes of members [the investors and the borrowers] who alone constitute these societies,” and who “might with as much probability of success, devise a game of cards at which all who played should rise up winners,—not reflecting, that although a fair and reasonable benefit may be secured to the investor by lending on equitable terms to the borrower, yet an extra profit beyond this, which is promised to the one, can only be obtained at the expense of the other.”

On the whole, we are disposed to regard this treatise as a very valuable one, even though it should do no more than fulfil the first of its professed objects, namely, operate as a thorough and corrective exposure of the errors and dangers of the present system; and as such